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ABSTRACT

The Carnegie Council's position on public and academic policy issues involved in the Bakke case is summarized in this publication. The Council holds that the racial experience of an academically admissible student is among the criteria relevant to admissions decisions. In speaking of race, the experience of persons raised in non English speaking homes, as well as that of members of racial minority groups, is included. Features of public and academic policy in higher education are discussed as they relate to racial criteria in admissions. Specific recommendations are offered for policy affecting admissions to selective schools at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. A two stage model of the admissions process is suggested. In this model, minimal standards would be set to determine "admissibility", the first stage. These standards would be applied uniformly to all applicants. Considerations of race, sex and ethnicity would have no place in admissibility decisions, but would be involved in "selection", the second stage of the admissions process. (Author/GC)

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THE RELEVANCE OF RACE IN ADMISSIONS

A SUMMARY OF THE POSITION OF THE CARNEGIE COUNCIL ON POLICY STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AS REPORTED IN "SELECTIVE ADMISSIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PUBLIC POLICY AND ACADEMIC POLICY"

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PROLOGUE

The case of *Bakke* vs. *The Regents of the University of California* has given rise to an unprecedented flood of comment and debate in the public press, in legal circles, and in the academic world. Some of it has been dispassionate but much has been deeply charged with emotion.

The legal interest in *Bakke* is clear. The basis of the case is the charge by Allan Bakke, a white man, that he was discriminated against because of his race when he was denied admission to the Medical School of the University of California at Davis while minority students with lesser credentials in the form of grades and test scores were admitted under a quota system. The Supreme Court will decide whether or not the special admissions program at Davis violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The acute interest of academic institutions is equally clear. The case is widely seen as a test of their right to pursue policies of affirmative action in general and specifically to give consideration to a person's race in their admissions policies and procedures. Those admissions policies and procedures exert a powerful and often controlling influence on who may enter certain critical occupations and practice certain professions in this country. Thus they control access to positions of influence and of high economic and social reward. The broad interest of the whole society is powerfully affected.

It was not the Council's purpose to address the constitutional issue in *Bakke*. Rather, we considered the questions of public policy and of academic policy that are at issue and have outlined broad boundaries within which we believe lie many acceptable courses of action for institutions of higher education. We believe these courses of action meet the tests of constitutionality, respect individual rights, and fully recognize pressing societal obligations to put an end to racial discrimination. We also believe they will promote the institutions' educational ends. We have sought a "golden mean" that draws on several American ideals, rather than on one alone; that rejects no basic American ideal in its entirety in the name of some other. We have not discovered a panacea, nor do we favor a single approach to the complex matter of admissions policy: quite the contrary, as we will try to make clear.

This paper summarizes the major conclusions expressed by the Council in a book (*Selective Admissions in Higher Education*) forthcoming from Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. The first part of the full report contains the Carnegie Council's comments and recommendations. The second and third parts of the report were prepared by Winton H. Manning and by Warren Willingham and Hunter Breland, all of Educational Testing Service, who were asked by the Council to prepare an analysis of critical issues and a summary of essential facts in admissions today.

POSITION OF THE CARNEGIE COUNCIL

To address the principal issue immediately: the position of the Carnegie Council is that *the racial experience of an academically admissible applicant —one who meets the impartial academic standards required for successful completion of college or university work—is among the criteria relevant to admissions decisions. In speaking of racial experience, we would include not*

only the experience of members of racial groups, but also that of persons raised in non-English-speaking homes. Race not only may but should be considered in the final selection where, in the case of an individual, his or her racial identity reflects prior adverse circumstances, a promise to contribute to the educational experience of other students or to the diversity of services to be provided to society.

THE RELEVANCE OF RACE IN ADMISSIONS

Admissions policy for selective schools has long been a concern within higher education. The problem is particularly acute in the case of schools that serve as virtually the sole avenue of entry into such professions as medicine and law, and that collectively turn away more students than they admit. We are concerned here with what is good public policy and what is good academic policy governing such admissions, and how the two may best be reconciled if their requirements diverge.

A. Public Policy

The public has a clear interest in access to higher education. This interest begins with the creation of places for students. Historically, direct and indirect support from the public purse has made possible the American system of colleges, universities, and professional schools and maintains that system today. One reason for this investment of public funds is to train people for professional and other specialized positions vital to the well-being of the entire society. The public thus has a special interest in the criteria used in filling the selective places; in particular, in assuring that they be filled on the basis of fair and reasonable institutional policies and procedures, and that no one is subject to discrimination on the basis of race or sex or religion or ethnic origin.

The public interest has another dimension. Schools which largely determine, through their admissions practices, the composition of the professions, and thus the services available to society, should not knowingly admit—and should never confer degrees upon—persons who they believe will be incompetent in practicing the profession; otherwise the consumers of their services may be injured. These schools should also make every effort to admit and to graduate persons who will meet the diversified needs of a heterogeneous, pluralistic nation. Individuals with potential talent from all segments of society should have a fair chance to rise to positions of leadership both in simple justice to them and in service of the need for leaders, models of ad-

vancement, and mentors for those in comparable life circumstances who aspire to similar education and careers. The need is especially urgent within those groups deprived of such opportunities in the past.

Higher education carries a great affirmative responsibility to advance this dimension of the general welfare. The professional schools that yield many of our community, regional, and national leaders stand in a very special position today to make effective in practice the most fundamental principles of the American nation while at the same time meeting the individual's claims to equal protection.

B. Academic Policy

The admissions policies of institutions of higher education are varied and complex. In one way or another, perhaps 60 percent of all admissions are selective. Combining the degree of selectivity and the choice of the weighting of considerations, the possible admissions policies are almost infinite in number. For selective institutions the composition of their student bodies is of great, sometimes dominating, importance, and is the major source of their contributions to society.

The United States prides itself on the great diversity of its colleges, on the lack of conformity among them. This diversity offers students a wide range of choices while providing to society graduates with a broad range of training and academic experience. Consequently, colleges should have, and historically have had, very substantial autonomy in setting their own admissions policies. Restraints should be imposed on that autonomy only when there exists a substantial public interest that cannot be served in other ways.

In their admissions practices, selective institutions variously take into account prior scholastic grades, test scores, special abilities (peer group leadership, athletic ability, etc.), special personal characteristics (such as proven ability to rise above obstacles, including language barriers, poor prior schooling, or physical handicaps), potential contributions to a profession (shown, for example, by interest in serving in a neglected area or specialty). Such institutions also look at characteristics that will contribute to the diversity of the student body—for example, by state or nation of origin, by parental occupation or income, by cultural background. They often choose to build academic and social communities through their admissions policies. Because students learn from each other, these communities are themselves educational mechanisms.

Grades and test scores, taken together, have a predictive value greater than grades alone or tests alone. A considerable body of evidence indicates that test scores are equally predictive for minority and majority students. While grades and scores are sufficiently predictive to be very useful in selective admissions, they are not, however, sufficient as a sole basis for decision. They are best at identifying at one end of the spectrum those applicants who are likely to distinguish themselves academically and at the other end those likely to fail—and failure is costly to the student and to the institution. They are insufficient particularly for determining the admission of a great many persons found between these extremes.

The selective professional schools must exercise particular care not to admit students who lack the ability to practice the professions with compe-

tency and integrity. They must also be conscious of the need to supply graduates who will meet the varied needs of the profession. These schools therefore have a quite legitimate interest in special persons with special characteristics—for example, those who have shown a strong interest in community service, or those who have shown they can face adversity and conquer it through the force of their own personalities—for these characteristics relate directly to potential service within the profession. Different professional schools will, of course, look for different things, related to the emphasis in their own instructional programs. The complex and sensitive decision process calls for judgment. It does not lend itself to easy mechanical solutions.

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Public and academic policy could diverge if, for example, public policy were to lead to a lowering of academic standards, or if it interfered too greatly with professional judgments; or if academic policy obstructed affirmative action or was not otherwise fair and reasonable. But they need not diverge. The challenges are to apply public policy without undue interference with academic judgments and concerns, and for institutions to satisfy public policy without loss of academic standards.

C. Recommendations for Public Policy and for Academic Policy

We turn now to our specific suggestions for policy affecting admissions to selective schools at both the undergraduate and graduate levels:

1. These schools should adhere to a policy of affirmative action in educational practices:
   (a) No policies or practices may discriminate against members of groups subject to discrimination
   (b) Special efforts should be made to recruit members of these groups
   (c) Compensatory education should be available to such persons when necessary
   (d) Special financial assistance and counseling should be provided when needed, and
   (e) Goals may be set against which progress can be measured.

2. Race or background in a non-English-language home should be eligible for consideration *in individual cases* where it (a) reflects prior adverse discrimination, or (b) contributes to prior educational disadvantage, or (c) involves direct knowledge of special cultural patterns and experiences, or (d) indicates, along with other evidence, the probability of subsequent provisions of specially needed services to society. The first and second considerations (a and b) are based on the principles of equality of treatment and equality of opportunity, the third (c) on institutional interest in diversity in the student community, and the fourth (d) on the needs of society for service.

   We emphasize racial experience, not race *per se;* and experience in a non-English-language home, not heritage or surname *per se.* Thus we say *in individual cases.* Most persons with a minority racial background or raised in a non-English-language home now have special characteristics which we believe warrant consideration; not all do—some have not expe-

rienced prior adverse social discrimination, have not been educationally disadvantaged, have had little or no contact with a minority culture, and have no interest in special services to society.

Race or other minority status should be only one of several dimensions considered as aspects of prior disadvantage or adverse discrimination, as one of several indicators of prospective contributions to the diversity and quality of the academic experience for other students, and as one of several intimations of intention to serve society in neglected areas. Thus individuals from the majority group may also warrant special consideration depending upon their background circumstances.

3. No student should be admitted who cannot meet the general academic standards set for all students, through assessment of prior grades and test scores, as the minimum level at which there is a reasonable chance of success in completing the course work without reduction in academic or professional standards. Race, or other minority status, or sex, or age is clearly not a consideration here.

4. No numerical quota for any component should be set, but rather goals should be established that may change over time as conditions change and may be exceeded or remain unmet depending on the composition of the body of applicants in any one year.

5. Financial aid should be provided to students from low-income families to attract them in sufficient numbers into the "pool" of applicants within which choices will be made.

6. All applicants should be processed through the same set of procedures to assure that they are looked at together and not separately, that an effective student body is being assembled and not separate quotas being met, and that each person is being evaluated on his or her own merits.

7. Procedures should call for the application of professional judgment by members of the faculty. In the absence of fully objective criteria, application of professional judgment is the best available approach.

8. Schools should be given maximum latitude in exercising their judgments about the admission of individual students with respect for the professional expertise involved in the judgments, for the complexity of the characteristics desired in the students, for the detailed and changing needs for graduates of the programs in different localities served, and in consideration of the wisdom of encouraging diversity among the schools.

9. The judgment of courts, or legislatures, or government officials should not replace professional judgment except when clearly required by the public interest. Rigid and simplistic formulas externally imposed should, in any event, be avoided. Student bodies should be chosen on a multidimensional basis and not as the result of a unidimensional contest to be won or lost on the basis of a single (and imprecise) measure.

We are suggesting, then, a two-stage model of the admissions process. Selective graduate and professional schools, like many selective colleges, not only have many more applicants than they can admit, but they have many more *qualified* applicants than they can enroll. Accordingly, many selective institutions make an effort, first, to eliminate from consideration those appli-

cants who do not meet some minimal standard of admissibility and then to focus their efforts on the difficult task of selecting a class from the still large pool of qualified applicants. The distinction between these two decisions—*admissibility* and *selection*—is an important one, especially in the context of *Bakke*.

Our contention is that minimal standards should be set no higher than is necessary to make decisions concerning *admissibility*, and should be applied uniformly to all applicants. Considerations of race, sex, ethnicity, or other categorical indexes have no place in admissibility decisions; however, such considerations are appropriate in the second stage of the admissions process —selection.

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The central social and educational issue of the *Bakke* case is the problem of balancing consideration of individual and group equity—a problem which turns upon difficult value choices. Not all individuals and not all institutions will agree about them. In this circumstance, the public must have access to the policies to be followed by an institution and must have confidence in the process by which decisions are made. The selective professional schools in particular must be prepared to face public scrutiny of their processes and their policies; and both the processes and the policies should conform to their own missions and to the demands of public policy, and should be fair as among individuals similarly situated. Above all, these schools must be concerned with making optimal use of their facilities to develop human resources for service to society. In the effort to reach this goal, *racial experience is relevant* within the admissions process because important educational and professional objectives will not be attainable unless, as colleges and universities go about the task of making admissions decisions, consideration is given to the minority status of individual applicants.

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